

**STATE OF THE NATION
BY WILMA P. MANKILLER**

**Cherokee National Holiday
Sept. 4, 1993**

Welcome to the Cherokee National Holiday, and especially welcome to people from out of town or out of state, who see this as a true homecoming and have joined us today. I would especially like to thank Joe Grayson who delivered the invocation. The usual person who delivers the invocation was Rev. Key Ketcher. Who we lost this past month. This was a tremendous loss to the Cherokee Nation and to his family and friends.

I would like to begin by telling you the state of the nation is good and I would like to thank the tribal council and deputy chief John Ketcher and employees of the Cherokee Nation for the incredible progress that we have made in the past few years.

I remember when I sat up here for the first time ten years ago in 1983, the Cherokee membership was less than 50,000, the budget was \$25,000. We have made an incredible amount of progress since that time. Every month the Cherokee Nation delivers services to thousands of people in our five clinics, head start programs, education programs, social service programs and many other programs and services that we provide. We have had phenomenal growth. In 1983 we had less than 50,000 members and today we have almost 148 thousand enrolled members. Our budget has increased annually at a rate of about \$6 million a year. Our budget for this past fiscal year was \$78 million.

I want to touch on a few highlights for this past year and some of the major issues that will be facing us in the coming year. I think everyone would agree that construction is often viewed as a sign of economic progress. The Cherokee Nation has undertaken about \$40 million dollars in new construction and renovations over the past several years. Some of that work is already complete, like the Redbird Health Center in Sallisaw. And some is just beginning like the Stilwell Clinic in Stilwell. Right now we have construction on going for the building of a \$11 million, 125,000 square-foot vocational education center on a 20 acre campus. We, two weeks ago, also broke ground on the Stilwell Clinic which will be a \$7 million clinic.

We broke ground in March for the second of our Bingo Outpost operations. The revenue from the outpost has exceeded our projection by 150 percent. We are in the process of opening a facility in West Siloam Springs as well as in Catoosa. For those of you who have gone by the tribal complex, the number of service programs that we operate have far exceeded the space we have in the tribal building. We issued one of the first bonds by an Indian tribe, for this kind of